

New Bedford's Buttonwood Park Zoo presents "Preserving a Future for Polar Bears Across the Arctic"

Buttonwood Park Zoo's Virtual "Wildlife Education Series" is holding its second installment on Wednesday, April 28, 2021 at 7PM. This educational program will showcase Alysa McCall, Director of Conservation Outreach, and Marissa Krouse, Program Manager for Polar Bears International (PBI). PBI is the only conservation organization solely dedicated to wild polar bears. Through research, education, and advocacy, they work to inspire people to care about the Arctic and its connection to our global climate.

Alysa McCall, Director of Conservation Outreach for PBI has a B.Sc. (Hon.) in Animal Biology from Thompson Rivers University and an M.Sc. in Ecology from the University of Alberta where her thesis focused on the polar bears of western Hudson Bay. She gained hands-on experience with polar bears from multiple fall and spring field seasons in Tuktoyaktuk and Churchill, and she has been heavily involved in the collaring and tracking of Hudson Bay polar bears.



Photo Courtesy of Polar Bears International.

Prior to joining PBI's staff, Alysa volunteered for several years in multiple capacities, including being a panelist on the Tundra Connections program and assisting with the Polar Bear Tracker. She is passionate about science education and polar bear conservation, and is dedicated to ensuring that future generations inherit a healthy planet.

About Marissa Krouse, Program Manager for PBI, has a B.A. in psychology with a focus in animal behavior. She worked in a zoo setting for nine years, specifically in the fields of conservation education and animal husbandry. Her role at PBI includes coordinating our Arctic Ambassador Center network, Education and Outreach campaigns, and leading our annual Climate Alliance training sessions for zoo staff, helping them to communicate effectively. She is the co-author of a Polar Bear Diet Trial publication in the Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine (2014) and has published in the American Association of Zookeepers National Conference Proceedings (2010, 2011). Marissa is a motivated conservationist who values teamwork and

is dedicated to helping others lead their communities. She believes in the legacy she will leave behind and works to leave a healthy planet for future generations.

Buttonwood Park Zoo's Education Curator, Carrie Hawthorne, has been collaborating with PBI since 2011, including traveling to Churchill, Manitoba, Canada where she has led leadership camps as recently as 2019. BPZOO's team is currently working to create Science on a Sphere datasets using PBI's polar bear tracking data, showcasing their research with a global network of educators to connect the polar bear's story to climate change.

The "Wildlife Education Series" will be held virtually, on Zoom, and is free to attend, but pre-registration is required. Donations are encouraged at the time of registration and will be shared with the speaker's organization. For more information, visit <https://www.bpzoo.org/whats-new/wildlife-education-series/>.

Celebrate Portuguese culture with Bristol Community College's FREE virtual World Portuguese Language Day Zoom event

This year's exciting program will include opening remarks from Dr. Laura L. Douglas, President of Bristol Community College and Dr. Carlos Almeida, Director of LusoCentro at Bristol Community College, and remarks by Dr. Shelley Pires, Consul of

Portugal in New Bedford; Dr. João Caixinha, Coordinator for Portuguese Language Programs and Education Affairs in the United States of America; and a presentation by students from the Global Learning Charter Public School in New Bedford.

The event will also feature keynote presenter Dr. Helena Santos Martins, an active member of the Luso-American community, in addition to a concert by Karina Gomes and her band.

The college's World Portuguese Language Day is sponsored in part by the Camões Institute, Consulate of Portugal in New Bedford, FLAD, Arte Institute, Consulate General of Brazil in Boston, Consulate General of Cabo Verde in Boston and the Bristol Community College Portuguese Club.

Bristol Community College is pleased to invite you to the college's virtual celebration of World Portuguese Language Day on Thursday, May 6, 2021, beginning at 9 a.m., on Zoom. The event is free and open to all.

Please register for the event using the link below. Once registered, participants will receive a confirmation email invite and information to join the virtual event.

Register here:
https://bristolcc-edu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUkfu-sqDMiHtwyiHv9f_lwsgAiUn8RZNf5

For more information about Bristol's 2021 World Portuguese Language Day, please contact Carlos Almeida by email at carlos.almeida@bristolcc.edu or call 401.919.4293.

High School Juniors Won't Need to Pass MCAS To Graduate in 2022

By Katie Lannan

State House News Service

This year's high school junior class will not need to take or pass MCAS tests in order to graduate, under a change approved Tuesday by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The move is one of a series of pandemic-influenced shifts the state has made within its standardized testing program since COVID-19 first shuttered school buildings last spring.

Students are typically required to pass 10th grade English and math MCAS exams in order demonstrate competency in the two subjects and graduate. Last year's 10th graders, the class of 2022, did not have an opportunity to take those tests last spring because education officials obtained a federal waiver and legislative approval to cancel the spring 2020 MCAS administration in the early days of remote learning.

Juniors will still be able to take the test in the spring and next fall to pursue scholarship opportunities, but the board voted to modify graduation requirements for the class of 2022 to allow those students to demonstrate competency in math and English by completing a relevant course instead of earning a passing MCAS score.

The change, which board member Matt Hills described as a "very narrow, tailored approach" affecting one class and one component of the exams, cleared the board unanimously.

"I think we're as far as we need to go, and I hope this is the end of the modifications to MCAS," Hills said.

Darlene Lombos, the board's labor representative, and Jasper Coughlin, its student representative, both said they'd like to have additional conversations about MCAS testing.

"During this year when it's really easy for students to feel cold and to feel that there aren't people at higher levels looking out for them, I think this is exactly the type of thing that shows students that we're caring about them," said Coughlin, a Billerica Memorial High School student.

The pandemic's disruptions to schooling have renewed debates about the role of standardized testing, with teachers unions and some lawmakers calling for the MCAS to be canceled this year, and the Baker administration describing the exams as a key tool for gauging where students may have fallen behind while learning remotely.

Ed Lambert, executive director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, wrote to the board on Tuesday voicing a position that members of the class of 2022 should still be required to take the MCAS even if they are not required to earn a certain score to demonstrate competency.

Lambert said that past years' passing rates suggest 85 percent or more students would achieve what would normally be considered a passing grade, and crossing that threshold would allow them "to know their diploma is of equal weight to those of previous classes of graduates."

For other students, Lambert said, their scores would provide information that could be used "to create an Educational Proficiency Plan for their final year of school designed to assist them in meeting the essential standards prior to graduation."

Board member Martin West suggested that schools encourage students to take the test, both for a chance to qualify for scholarships and to "learn about where they stand, relative to the expectations that we as a board have laid out for them."

The board also voted to solicit public comment on Commissioner Jeff Riley's proposed amendments to admissions regulations for vocational-technical schools. A final vote is expected in June after the comment period.

Among other changes, Riley's proposal would give the schools flexibility to set their own admissions policies "that promote equitable access," and would remove the requirement that grades, attendance, discipline record and counselor recommendation be used as admissions criteria.

Riley's plan also would require each vocational school and program to annually submit its admissions policy to the state by Aug. 15 and would bar the use of selective criteria that disproportionately exclude members of protected classes, unless the criteria is "validated as essential to participation" and alternatives are unavailable.

Two Chelsea High School students, Aya Faiz and Emily Menjivar, told the board that criteria like grades, attendance, disciplinary records and recommendations can create barriers for students of color, who can face bias at school.

Faiz said she is "extremely cautious" about her behavior at school after getting suspended for two days in middle school for using a curse word. She said she saw her white peers instead get punished with detentions for cursing, and that Black and brown students are often viewed as "more adultified" in schools and therefore receive harsher discipline.

"We are handed higher expectations despite usually being from schools that have less resources and we are punished more severely for not meeting them," she said.

Menjivar and Faiz are members of the Vocational Education Justice Coalition, which supports moving to lottery-based admissions.

Riley's amendments seek to make clear that the Department of

Elementary and Secondary Education can order changes to a school's admission policy in cases of non-compliance, and those changes "may include requiring a lottery," according to a memo outlining the proposal.

Another coalition member, Dan French of Citizens for Public Schools, urged the board to have updated rules for vocational school admissions in place by July so that school policies would be submitted for review this August, before the school year begins.

"We don't need another year of a discriminatory and exclusionary state policy in place," he said.

French said the new proposal does not go far enough because it gives each school "too much latitude" to interpret what criteria is allowable.

Board member Michael Moriarty called Riley's recommendations a "stronger approach than simply imposing lotteries across all schools." He said lotteries amount to "a solution that addresses access" but have "absolutely no eye on outcome."

UMass Dartmouth receives second grant for LED light fixture upgrades

New efficient light bulbs in the UMass Law School building funded by Eversource.

UMass Dartmouth recently received incentives from Eversource for \$15,056 to fund the replacement of over 1,900 older, less efficient light bulbs for new LED models in the UMass Law

School building, located at 333 Faunce Corner Road in Dartmouth.

Eversource works with its customers to provide incentives for a variety of energy efficiency upgrades to help lower electricity and gas use, energy costs, and carbon emissions. Inefficient bulbs can often be replaced at no cost to the customer. The customer only needs to provide the staffing to change the bulbs. In addition to the immediate energy savings, another benefit of LED bulb technology is that they last at least 12 years.

Eversource has simplified the process of upgrading old linear fluorescent lamps to new, high-efficiency LED lighting, by working with a network of distributor partners to provide incentives at the point of sale, these partners will even handle the exchanging and recycling of inefficient fluorescent, HID, or incandescent lamps.

“We’re proud to help UMass Dartmouth save on energy costs and lower their carbon emissions,” said Tilak Subrahmanian, Vice President of Energy Efficiency for Eversource. “LED lighting is a great way for customers to dramatically lower energy use at little or no cost with our incentives. Lighting upgrades are just one of the many energy-saving solutions we provide support for.”

Eversource and UMass Dartmouth have been working with Standard Electric to provide the pre-approved bulbs, which DLC Premium products, which maximize the savings to the University.

“Standard Electric’s partnership with Eversource on this program has allowed us to bring tremendous energy savings to customers like UMass Dartmouth with little to no upfront cost for the material we provide. Applying utility incentives at the time of purchase helps to get projects moving forward and has an immediate positive impact on the return on investment” says Nate Pedro, Director of Energy Solutions at Standard

Electric.

“At UMass Law, we teach our students to be thoughtful when considering how their efforts impact the communities they serve, and this same thoughtfulness goes into our larger responsibility to sustainability. The installation of new LED lights will bolster our building’s energy-saving efforts and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions,” said Dr. John Quinn, Assistant Dean for Public Interest Law and External Relations at UMass Law.

UMass Dartmouth has already replaced lighting on the main campus in the Liberal Arts, Dion, and College of Visual and Performing Arts buildings. This encompassed over 6,500 bulbs being replaced. The savings to the University and Commonwealth are immediate as the program was paid for through Eversource’s incentives and the bulbs were installed by University personnel.

“By making this transition, we are lowering our costs of operation and being responsible stewards of funds received from student’s tuition payments and the annual support from the legislature. It also reduces greenhouse gas emission at the University in our efforts to reach carbon neutrality by 2030,” said Assistant Director of Campus Sustainability, Jamie Jacquart.

**New Bedford Public Schools
students’ return goes**

smoothly

NBPS completes 4th phase of yearlong learning plan, leading to full return to classrooms!

New Bedford Public Schools, after months of being in a hybrid and serving 9,000 students 2-days per week completed its first week of 5-day in-person instruction for all grades during the week ending April 9, which continued at a smooth pace this week.



New Bedford Public Schools photo.

Emphasizing safety as the top priority, Superintendent Thomas Anderson stated, " Since April 5, all our elementary schools have expanded at multiple grade levels and our middle schools and high school were back with 5-day in-person instruction as of the end of last week. We must stick to appropriate distancing, hand sanitizing and mask wearing so we can, hopefully, enjoy the traditional end-of-year activities, including promotional ceremonies, graduation and other events."

At New Bedford High School, ninth graders returned April 5 and

6, with 10-12 graders back as of April 7. With their full return as of April 9, Headmaster Bernadette Coelho noted, "Even as we continue to ensure social distancing, the entire school has an air of excitement, with students and staff greeting each other with smiles and welcomes; it feels like the first day of the school year, though we've seen each other virtually since October."



New Bedford Public Schools photo.

Ensuring a smooth transition back to classrooms for every student, Superintendent Anderson stated, "Access through equity is critical and we are continuing to improve our system so parents can communicate with school staff in their native languages using a phone line that provides 350 languages, including Creole, K'iche, Russian and Arabic to name a few and has had more than 4,100 calls."

New Bedford Public Schools as of late January had been the largest school district in Massachusetts to retain in-person

instruction in a hybrid model since the beginning of the current school year.

Dartmouth's Bishop Stang High School returns to full-time in-person learning

After a highly acclaimed remote learning program last spring, and a successful hybrid learning model this fall and winter, Bishop Stang High School returned to full-time in-person learning on Monday, April 12. For the remainder of the spring semester, Bishop Stang students will report full-time in person every day. Learning remotely continues to be available for students who opt to remain home and for those students who may be unable to attend due to Covid related quarantine situations. Following health and safety protocols, including masking and physical distancing, will continue to be a top priority.

Regarding the return to full-time in person learning, President/Principal, Mr. Peter Shaughnessy, commented, "It was so great to see our students return full time. Monday felt like the start of a new year in many ways, full of excitement and optimism! I am very confident in our return because of the way in which our school community has navigated this pandemic thus far. Our parents, students, faculty, and staff have shown tremendous responsibility and care for one another in order to allow the learning process to serve our students and allow them to flourish. The hybrid model served us well during this, but the time and conditions were right for our return to full-time in-person learning."

Faculty and staff are thrilled to once again hear the sound of student voices filling classrooms and hallways. Math teacher Tim Morris summed up the feeling well, "I could not be happier to have our students back in the building. The evening before they all returned, I had trouble sleeping just like I always do the night before the first day of school. It was so exciting to hear the voices in the hallways, hear the laughter and joy in their voices when they saw their friends, and be able to watch in person while they learned their lessons for the day. The students are the reason we exist, and there is no substitute for the human interaction that takes place in the classroom daily. I am so proud of how much we were able to accomplish this year despite challenging circumstances and look forward to making these last few months of the year as memorable and full of learning as possible".

The school's daily schedule was modified to accommodate three lunch periods to allow space for appropriate social distancing, and additional desks have been returned to classrooms in keeping with CDC and DESE guidelines. Seats are assigned, and each classroom teacher maintains detailed seating charts to help provide quick and accurate contact tracing if needed.

Bishop Stang is exceedingly mindful of the pandemic's continued presence in our communities and offers gratitude to their families, students, and staff who have worked hard to remain vigilant and will continue to do so. The Bishop Stang community is grateful for this opportunity to once again continue the journey of education and growth for their students – in person, as a family, together.

Senator Warren Releases New Education Dept. Data Showing Widespread Benefits of Student Debt Cancellation

Today, U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) shared new and previously unreleased data from the U.S. Department of Education on the extent to which millions of student loan borrowers would benefit from up to \$50,000 in student debt cancellation. Senator Warren requested the federal data in an April 2, 2021 letter to Education Secretary Miguel Cardona.

“New Education Department data show that canceling \$50,000 of student loans would erase the debt entirely for 84% of borrowers. I’m looking forward to making the case in my Senate Banking Subcommittee hearing later today about why President Biden must cancel student debt,” said Senator Warren.

In February, Senator Warren and Majority Leader Chuck Schumer led their colleagues in reintroducing their bicameral resolution outlining a bold plan for President Biden to tackle the student loan debt crisis by using existing authority under the Higher Education Act to cancel up to \$50,000 in student loan debt for federal student loan borrowers.

The data show that 36 million borrowers would be completely relieved of their debt burdens if President Biden uses his existing authority to cancel \$50,000 in student loan debt. For comparison purposes, cancellation of up to \$10,000 in debt would relieve only 15 million borrowers of their debt.

Furthermore, under the \$50,000 plan, out of the 36 million borrowers who would be relieved of all their debt under the \$50,000 plan, 9.4 million are currently in default or delinquent.

There are presently 4.4 million borrowers, with \$211 billion in debt (an average of nearly \$48,000 per borrower), who have had student debt more than 20 years after graduation. Another 10.7 million borrowers, with \$458 million in total debt, have had student loans for more than a decade.

Senator Warren is one of the nation's leading voices calling for student debt cancellation, systemic reforms to make college accessible without taking on debilitating debt, and stronger protections for borrowers against predatory for-profit practices.

Today, Senator Warren will host her first hearing as chair of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Economic Policy. The hearing, "The Student Debt Burden and Its Impact on Racial Justice, Borrowers, & The Economy," will examine the student loan debt crisis in our country.

In March 2021, Senators Warren and Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) applauded the passage of their Student Loan Tax Relief Act as part of the American Rescue Plan. The provision makes any student loan forgiveness tax-free, ensuring borrowers whose debt is fully or partially forgiven are not saddled with thousands of dollars in surprise taxes. During her time in the Senate, she has helped return tens of millions of dollars tax-free to students cheated by for-profit colleges.

**Bristol Community College
President Laura L. Douglas**

and students to be featured at the 2021 Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference

Bristol Community College President Laura L. Douglas and Bristol students will be featured at the virtual 2021 Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference (MassURC), on Friday, April 23, 2021. The MassURC serves as an opportunity for undergraduate students from Massachusetts' public colleges, universities and community colleges to showcase their research and engage with peers, faculty and conference attendees. The conference will feature the research of 910 undergraduate students representing 26 of the Massachusetts public higher education institutions.

Laura L Douglas, President of Bristol Community College will participate in the MassURC's live panel discussion and Q&A session, alongside distinguished leadership from across the Massachusetts public higher education spectrum, including F. Javier Cevallos, President of Framingham State University and Kumble R. Subbaswamy, Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The leaders will engage with student presenters in a 45-minute discussion and Q&A session and share the impact that undergraduate research and creative scholarship have had on their careers.

Bristol Community College students Celina Brasil of South Attleboro, Robert Comerford of North Attleboro, Katherine Haley of Fall River, Magielette Hudson of Fall River and Hannah Walsh of Westport will represent the college's Commonwealth Honors program and showcase their research projects conducted during the Spring 2021 semester.

H. Zahra Caldwell, Associate Professor in the Ethnic and Gender Studies Department at Westfield State University, has been selected as the 2021 MassURC keynote speaker. Her keynote, "Research & Wonder, The Terrible, The Historical, and The Joyous," will explore Caldwell's own cultural history research and wonder surrounding a lineage of Black women activist artists and the often terrible historical and modern backdrops within which they created and existed as artists and citizens. Professor Caldwell is an educator and cultural historian who teaches in the fields of history, Black studies and women's studies.

The day-long conference will provide pre-recorded and live programming. All students will have pre-recorded research presentations available for viewing on the MassURC mobile app. beginning on Tuesday, April 20. Many of the MassURC presenters will participate in live discussions about their work during the "Research in Conversation" sessions on the day of the conference.

For more information about the 2021 Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference, including student researcher spotlights, please visit <https://www.umass.edu/honors/curriculum/opportunities/MassURC>

Massachusetts state and local police hold successful "Coffee with a Cop" event

with help from K9s and horses

“An astounding turnout from local residents Tuesday in Norfolk at our latest Coffee With A Cop event, held by the Massachusetts State Police Community Liaison Team with our partners in the community, Norfolk Police.

Thank you to Cilla’s Coffeehouse on Liberty Lane for hosting the event, as well as Golden Opportunities for Independence – a non-profit organization that trains service and resource dogs – for bringing some of their canine students, who proved to be a big hit!

The State Police Employee Assistance Unit and the Massachusetts Department of Corrections also appeared with their crisis response dogs Margaux and Mugsy, respectively, and the State Police Mounted Unit brought horses Captain and Scout to showcase the close relationships these teams share.

The Massachusetts State Police Community Liaison Troopers for Troops A, B, C, and H shared coffee and discussion with the people of Norfolk and surrounding communities on a beautiful morning.

Watch our social media spaces for notice of more gatherings like this one in the coming weeks. We hope you can join us at one of them and tell us what’s important to you.”

All photos by the Massachusetts State Police:



Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife spread awareness about people trying to save young wildlife

“YOUNG WILDLIFE: Every spring, people make the mistake of trying to “save” young wildlife.

The truth is, most wild animals do not need our help. Some types of young animals develop quickly; others need more parental care before they can fend for themselves. People sometimes assume that a young animal found alone must be orphaned and need help. In nearly all cases, this is not true.

Parents frequently leave young alone for long periods as they

search for food. The best thing you can do to help young animals is to leave them alone. Their best chance of survival is in the wild. Learn more: bit.ly/young-animals.”



Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife photo.